

*A Word
to
Master Masons*

By

CHARLES C. HUNT, P. G. H. P.



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My Brother: When you were raised to the degree of a Master Mason were you not filled with amazement at the sublime truths there set before you? Did you not feel that you had reached the very summit of Masonry and that nothing more could be added? Did you not see in that strange ceremonial mystery of the Degree of Master Mason the legend of the soul and its struggle to rise from the darkness of earth to the glorious light of eternal life? If such has been your experience, the degree has not been conferred on you in vain.

But have you followed up the opportunities there offered you? Have you striven to live up to the ideals there laid before you? Have you sought to grow in knowledge and the practice of Masonic truth, or have you considered the sublime lessons of the Third Degree as mere beautiful ideals, which could not be attained and therefore to be admired but not striven for?

In the loss of the Word and the adoption of a substitute, did you get the idea that your case was hopeless, and that it was useless to strive for

still greater light? If so, my Brother, you misread the teachings of the degree. We are told that the substitute is a temporary expedient. It is to be used only until future ages find out the right. Therefore you are to continue to *advance in Masonry*, since by so doing, in due time, the promised reward will be attained.

Masonry teaches that you should strive to realize its high ideals in your own life and neglect no opportunity to accomplish this result. Real advancement in Masonry is growth in character and our Masonic Degrees are the text books which teach us how to attain it. You have received three of the degrees and are now entitled to petition for that of Royal Arch.

It is true that you should not seek this degree immediately after receiving the Master's. A little time should elapse while you center your mind on the lessons of the *Master's Degree*. Its lecture should be thoroughly learned and to some extent its symbolism should be studied before seeking advancement. But do not delay too long, or there will be danger of your losing interest in that which you have already received.

I know there are those who will tell you that all there is of Masonry is in the symbolic lodge, and that is

true; but they go on to say that you have no need of any further degree. Such an argument carried to its logical conclusion would have stayed your advancement after you had received the First Degree, for it is equally true that all there is of Masonry is contained in the Degree of an Entered Apprentice. The fundamental truths of Masonry are there. In the other degrees we but behold the development of the germ of the seed that was sown in the First Degree.

We might with equal truth say that all there is of mathematics is contained in the simple processes of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. Just as the child, after learning the multiplication table needs instruction in its practical application, so does the Master Mason need further light in Masonry before he can fully comprehend the beauties and grandeur of the degrees he has already received.

The Mason who would acquire mastership has need of all the light and knowledge attainable. The poor boy thirsting for knowledge, but deprived of the advantages of the schools, might by hard, painstaking labor acquire an education; but he keenly feels his handicap, and realizes how much more he could ac-

comply, if he had the assistance of qualified instructors and the inspiration of companions pursuing the same subjects with him. So you as a Mason *may be* able to gain a mastery of the principles of Masonry from the lessons of the Symbolic Lodge alone; but have you ever considered how much easier it would be and how much more you could accomplish, if you had the aid of the light furnished by the additional degrees?

Perhaps you have heard Masonic speakers, or read Masonic writers who said that the Third Degree was incomplete, and you may have wondered what they meant. In so saying they did not mean that the Third, or any of the symbolic degrees, was imperfect, for each one perfectly symbolizes the lesson it is intended to teach. What they meant is that the symbolism of these degrees has to do with the incompleteness of this earthly life and no matter how far we may have advanced, there is still something for us to acquire. But you say, while this may be true of the first two degrees it is not true of the sublime lessons of the Third Degree. To which I reply that it is more true of the Third than of the other two. In the Second Degree we found that we had

received light in Masonry but partially, and nowhere in the Third Degree are we told that we have received it completely. True, we have received further light in Masonry, but even here it is only partial. The Temple remains unfinished; the very keystone is missing, though its loss does not appear in this Degree. As the Temple is almost completed but not quite finished, so all through the degree are we reminded of a failure just short of attainment.

Did you think you were a Master Mason after the obligation and the usual instruction? Did you not find yourself in error and that there were still lessons to be learned, ideals to be attained, longings to be satisfied, and that you were still very much in need of instruction? Yes, my Brother, there are veils to be passed of which you have not even heard, before you can obtain the Word for which you have toiled these many years. Let me, therefore, call your attention to the fact that while the Third Degree symbolizes incompleteness and failure just short of attainment that in place of the reward for which you had so long toiled you must be content with a substitute—the Royal Arch symbolizes the fulfillment of every promise, the attainment of every ideal, the

completion of our spiritual Temple, and the realization of our highest hopes.

In the Third Degree, hope, the anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast, was presented to your view but to be effective she must be joined with the faith which will enable you to pass the veils which intervene between you and the realization of your fondest hopes.

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